Bugyals (Alpine pastures) in the Himalayas and the preservation of Gangotri-Gomukh-Tapovan route; and

(b) if so, the steps and follow-up action proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ) : (a) and (b) The information is being collected from the State Government and will be laid on the Table of the House.

National Commission for SCs/STs

2500. SHRI CHITTA BASU : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the National Commission for SCs/STs has suggested a series of steps including an increase in the reservation for SCs and STs in proportion to increase in their population; and

(b) if so, the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) and (b) The National Commission for SCs/STs set up under Article 338 of the Constitution consequent to the 65th Constitutional Amendment Act (1990), has so far submitted 2 reports. The reports have several recommendations relating to education, economic development besides service safeguards to SCs/STs. The first report has been circulated to all State Governments/UT Administrations besides Central Ministries/Departments. The second report is in the process of circulation. After obtaining comments from the Central Ministries/Departments and the State Governments/UT Administration the reports of the National Commission for SCs/STs along with the Action Taken Report (ATR) will be tabled in the Parliament.

Free Sale of Wheat

2501. SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Food Corporation of India (FCI) turned down various suggestions made by the Government of Uttar Pradesh regarding the release of free sale wheat for the month of December, 1996;

(b) if so, the suggestions made by the State Government; and

(c) the reasons for turning down these suggestions?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (c) FCI has not turned doen any suggestion made by the Government of Uttar Pradesh. FCI allocated wheat for Open Sale to the Government of Uttar Pradesh depending upon the total movement of wheat planned for the month of December, 1996 for Uttar Pradesh. Wheat is sold under Open Market Sale Scheme only if the stocks are available over and above the requirements under PDS/RPDS/other welfare schemes sponsored by the Government.

[Translation]

Devchanda Agriculture Farm.

2502. SHRI MAHABIR LAL BISHVAKARMA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to revive Devchanda Agriculture Farm run by Damodar Valley Corporation in Hazaribagh district of Bihar;

(b) if so, the time by which it is likely to be started;

(c) if not, whether the Government propose to provide alternate employment to thousands of persons rendered unemployed as a result of closure of the Farm; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. It may be mentioned that Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), one of the first multipurpose integrated river valley projects, has closed Devchanda Agriculture Farm and handed it over to Forest Department, Government of Bihar in 1994. Employees working on the above-mentioned Farm have been rehabilitated in other formations of DVC.

[English]

Fencing of Border

2503. SHRI BADAL CHOUDHURY :
SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA :
SHRI UDDHAB BARMAN :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the details of erection of barbed wire fencing along the international border, State-wise;

(b) whether any change in the original plan of fencing the border has been made; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) The details are as under :

State	Sanctioned	Completed	Amount Spent
	Kms.	Kms.	(in crores)
Punjab	452.22	452.22	79.50
Rajasthan	1032.60	719.73	131.73
Assam	158.00	125.54	13.67
Meghalaya	231.00	170.71	24.67
West Bengal	507.00	356.18	64.25
Jammu and Kashmir	180.00	—	11.71

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Ban on Begging

2504. SHRI PUNNU LAL MOHLE : Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to impose ban on the practice of begging;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to formulate any concrete programme for them; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) to (c) A number of States and Union Territories have enacted legislation for beggary prevention. To supplement the State Government's efforts towards beggary prevention, the Central Government has a scheme for establishing Work Centres in beggar homes run by the State Government.

[English]

Elephant Habitats

2505. SHRI AYYANNA PATRUDU :
SHRIMATI SARADA TADIPARTHI :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether elephant habitats are endangered on account of human encroachments; and

(b) if so, the measures proposed to be taken to ensure that the elephants do not leave forest owing to encroachments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ) : (a) Yes, Sir. Human encroachments are potential threats to the elephant habitats as they result in degradation and fragmentation of the habitats.

(b) The elephants sometimes leave the forests because of reasons other than encroachments. However, in order to counter the impact of encroachments as the cause of elephant movements out of the forests, the Central Government provides assistance to the State Governments for implementation of the following measures :

(i) Ecological restoration and protection of elephant habitats;

(ii) Extension, wherever possible, of elephant habitats adjoining National Parks and Sanctuaries;

(iii) Erection of elephant proof barriers at the interface between human habitations and elephant habitats;

(iv) Driving dis-oriented elephant herds back into the forests.

Deforestation in Assam

2506. SHRI DWARAKA NATH DAS : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that unplanned deforestation in Assam to feed paper mills would definitely cause the environmental hazard;

(b) if so, the measures taken by the Government to check such deforestation;

(c) whether the steps have also been taken so that paper mills in the region could depend on their own plantation of the bamboos; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ) : (a) The Government of Assam has reported that no such report of unplanned deforestation in Assam for supply of raw materials to the existing paper mills has been received.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The existing paper mills have not yet launched any programme for captive plantation within the State except supply of seedlings/rhizomes to the local villagers.

(d) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Betal Farming

2507. SHRI DINESH CHANDRA YADAV : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the fact that almost 18 lakhs people in 27 districts of Bihar depend on the betel cultivation;